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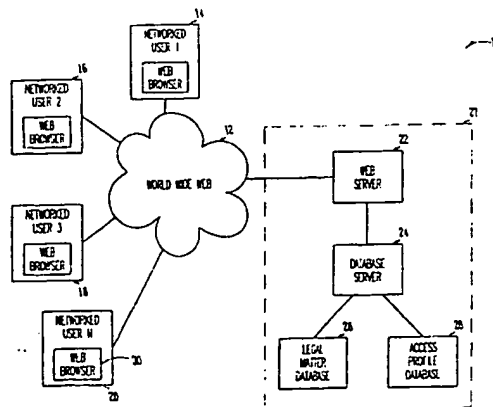
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(54) Title: PROCUREMENT OF LEGAL SERVICES USING A BID PROCESS CONDUCTED VIA A GLOBAL COMPUTER NETWORK



(57) Abstract: A system and method for procurement of legal services makes use of a bid process conducted via a global computer network such as the Internet. Information concerning a legal matter is posted on a network resource residing on the global computer network. Bids are accepted from network users for delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter from network users. Clients and legal representatives are situated as network users with access to one or more network resources that operate as a bid intermediary. The network resources can be arranged to provide a real-time bidding environment in which legal representatives submit bids for specific legal matters posted by clients. Multiple legal representatives may access information concerning particular legal matters posted by clients using web browser applications. In addition, a client may submit information concerning particular legal matters using web browser applications. The system and method provide an efficient mechanism for promoting price competition among legal representatives and decreasing the overall cost of legal services to clients.

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**PROCUREMENT OF LEGAL SERVICES USING A BID PROCESS
CONDUCTED VIA A GLOBAL COMPUTER NETWORK**

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to procurement of legal services and, more particularly, procurement of legal representation using bid processes.

BACKGROUND

Procurement of legal services can consume a great deal of time and resources. The client ordinarily is faced with a number of considerations for selection of legal representatives, including legal or technical competence, availability, cost, and potential ethical conflicts. Consequently, the interview and selection of legal representatives can be cumbersome. When flat fee, capped, or contingent representation is desired, the selection process may become even more burdensome. In particular, each prospective legal representative typically reviews the size, complexity, and legal basis of the matter before offering a flat fee, maximum, or contingent arrangement.

Even if the matter is appealing, the client and legal representative still need to negotiate the terms of the representation. Often, it is difficult to compare offers from different legal representatives simultaneously as clients meet with legal representatives in sequence. Again, this process can prolong the selection of legal representatives, and divert the client's attention from its business objectives. At the same time, each prospective legal representative typically has little information concerning the terms offered by others and cannot bargain effectively. As a result, in the absence of vigorous head-to-head competition, the terms obtained by the client may be less than ideal.

SUMMARY

The present invention is directed to a system and method for procurement of legal services using a bid process conducted via a global computer network such as the Internet. The present invention provides a system and method for facilitating selection of

legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network. The system and method provide network users with access to information concerning a legal matter on a network resource residing on the global computer network, and accept bids from network users for delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter.

5 Clients and legal representatives are situated as network users with access to one or more network resources. In particular, the network resources can be arranged to provide a real-time bidding environment in which legal representatives submit bids for specific legal matters posted by clients. The system and method may be implemented via software executing on computers connected to the global computer network such as the
10 World Wide Web. Multiple legal representatives may access information concerning particular legal matters posted by clients using web browser applications. In this manner, the system and method can provide a web-based infomediary in the sense that they facilitate person-to-person or business-to-business online exchanges that leverage the Internet to unite service providers and customers into a single, efficient virtual
15 marketplace that provides a concentration of pertinent information.

 Information describing the details of particular legal matters can be posted by clients to one or more network resources. Prior to bidding, legal representatives access the information to analyze the scope of the matter in terms of factors such as size, complexity, legal basis, factual basis, and potential conflict. During a bidding phase, the
20 legal representatives submit bids for representation of the client with respect to a specific matter. The legal representatives can be selected in advance on the basis of competence, experience, availability, geography, and other factors. For example, the client may submit a list of legal representatives who are authorized to bid on specific matters, or who are specifically excluded from the bidding process.

25 Alternatively, an administrator of the bidding resources may scrutinize the competence of legal representatives to formulate a default set of legal representatives who are generally authorized to access the client information and submit bids. As a further alternative, the administrator may formulate multiple default sets according to specific categories of legal matters, such as legal specialty. A default set of legal

representatives may be designated for employment law matters, for example, whereas a different set of legal representatives may be designated for intellectual property matters.

Bidding ordinarily will be voluntary. Access profiles can be applied to the lists, however, to prevent access by particular legal representatives who are known to have a potential ethical conflict. Legal representatives will desire to avoid access to confidential information of certain clients, thereby avoiding conflict problems and the potential for disqualification in future lawsuits. The legal representative may identify pertinent clients or subject matter areas to be added to the access profile for a legal representative. In particular, the legal representative may request that it not be exposed to legal matters concerning a particular party or any legal matter adverse to another party. The access profile can be applied in an automated manner based on key words or fields in the information posted for a particular legal matter.

Also, legal representatives may desire to be excluded from legal matters that are outside of their core practice areas. An intellectual property firm, for example, may request exclusion from matters involving securities trading. Similarly, a securities firm may request exclusion from matters involving products liability. In any event, access profiles can be constructed to effectively keep legal representatives informed of matters in which they may be interested, and uninformed of matters that are not of interest or which may cause ethical conflict dilemmas.

For efficiency, authorization of legal representatives may proceed on an "opt-in" basis. In other words, legal representatives may be given access to legal matters in which they express an interest. A legal representative may request, for example, that it be informed only of legal matters in the intellectual property area. Upon access to the network resource, only legal matters in the requested area are initially accessible, reducing the volume and clutter of postings for each individual legal representative.

It may be desirable to "package" or "pool" separate legal matters for the bidding process. In this manner, a number of legal matters can be combined for placement with a single legal representative. The matters could be combined, for example, on the basis of similarity of legal theory, facts, or technology. In particular, preparation of a number of different patent applications involving similar technology can be packaged together for

auction. Other legal matters, such as multiple debt collection or products liability suits, may be susceptible to economies of scale if packaged together.

Alternatively, a number of dissimilar legal matters can be combined simply on the basis of convenience. Indeed, working with a single legal representative, instead of
5 several, can provide the client with administrative advantages whether subject matter is similar or not. Packaging can simplify the bidding process, reducing the number of different matters up for bid. Also, packaging can promote the participation of larger firms in the bidding process. Instead of bidding on several individual matters, a legal representative can walk away with a larger volume of work.

10 The bidding process also may have a collective aspect, either between clients or legal representatives. In addition to packaging its own matters, a client may seek to pool its matters with one or more additional clients. In other words, two or more clients may choose to pool their legal matters for the bidding process, again increasing the volume of overall work on which the legal representatives will bid. As in any other profession,
15 legal representatives often are amenable to a volume discount. Pooling of matters with other clients can provide a larger volume of work that permits access to such volume discounts.

Further, legal representatives may have the capability to pool bids. When a larger package of legal matters is posted for bidding, smaller firms may have insufficient
20 resources to handle all of them. To promote their participation in higher volume work, firms may pool their bids and then divide the work among themselves. In this manner, smaller firms can compete with larger firms without compromising their growth plans or stretching themselves too far. The firms that pool their bids may have preexisting relationships, and may identify themselves to clients as collaborators for purposes of the
25 bidding process. Alternatively, pooling may take place on an ad-hoc basis, and be facilitated by communication between the legal representatives.

Bidding may take place on a flat fee basis. If the legal matter concerns preparation of a patent application, for example, the bidder may agree to a flat or maximum dollar amount for preparation and filing. A flat fee refers to a fee that will be
30 charged to the client without regard to the legal representative's time investment in the

matter. A maximum fee refers to the maximum amount the client will be billed, even though the billed amount could be less depending on the legal representative's time investment. The bidder may even agree to a flat or maximum dollar amount for follow-on prosecution of the subject patent application. Flat or maximum fee bids will be appropriate for other matters such as legal opinion work, regulatory work, and other matters having somewhat predictable time commitments. Also, flat or maximum bids could be provided for legal defense work.

As an alternative, bidding may take place on a contingent basis in which the legal representative agrees to a stake in the legal matter. In the case of a plaintiff's lawsuit, for example, the legal representative may bid for a percentage of damages or other revenue recovered as a result of the suit. In other cases, the legal representative may bid for a stake in other revenue or equity in the client's venture. With a patent application, for example, the legal representative may bid for a percentage of future licensing or sales revenue, an equity interest in the client's firm, or options to acquire such an interest.

The makeup of the contingent bid has a number of possibilities. The administrator of the bidding process may set guidelines for bids in advance of the bidding process. For example, the administrator may specify that all bids should conform to a particular equity interest that is defined by the client. Alternatively, the administrator may specify two or more different formats, or leave the bidding format to the individual representatives on an ad hoc basis. In the end, the client will select one of the bids that looks most attractive, or provide the administrator with a threshold or parameters for an acceptable bid. At the close of the bidding process, the lowest bid is accepted and both the client and legal representative with the winning bid is notified.

Alternatively, the client is given the opportunity to select any one of the bids. In this manner, the client can benefit from price competition produced by the bidding process, but still select a desired legal representative based on other factors such as competence, size, availability, and geography. In this case, the client can be given access to information about the legal representatives during the bidding process. The information may include firm resumes, individual legal representative resumes, descriptions of projects handled by the firm or legal representative, and a list of existing

clients. In this case, there is no guarantee that the legal representative submitting the lowest bid will be given the legal matter. All legal representatives can be given access to the current low bid, however, to promote price competition.

To facilitate the legal representatives' analysis of a particular legal matter, and
5 thereby better inform the bidding process, the posted matter may include detailed information about the matter, such as a factual background. A patent-related matter, for example, may include links to an invention disclosure, prior art, related patents, and web sites associated with the prospective client, pertinent products, and competitors. Moreover, the posted matter may include links providing detailed financial information
10 about the particular client. Advantageously, in many cases, this supplemental information can be gathered from public domain databases distributed across the global computer network.

Upon selection of a legal representative, necessary information concerning the legal matter can be automatically transmitted to the legal representative via the global
15 computer network. If the legal matter concerns preparation of a patent application, for example, the legal representative may be granted more extensive access to information such as pertinent invention disclosures, prior art, laboratory notebook entries, related applications, and inventor contact information. This information may be accessed in the form of an HTML document that provides links to electronic copies of the above
20 documents. For a patent infringement or validity opinion, the information could include links to electronic copies of pertinent prosecution and litigation histories.

In one embodiment, the present invention provides a method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising posting information concerning a legal matter on a network resource
25 residing on the global computer network, and accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter from network users.

In another embodiment, the present invention provides a method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising posting information concerning different legal matters for a client as
30 a package of legal matters on a network resource residing on the global computer

network, and accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the package from network users.

In an added embodiment, the present invention provides a method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising posting information concerning different legal matters from different
5 clients as a pool of legal matters on a network resource residing on the global computer network, and accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the pool of legal matters from network users.

In a further embodiment, the present invention provides a method for facilitating
10 selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising posting information concerning a legal matter on a network resource residing on the global computer network, and accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the legal from network users, and permitting different network users to submit collective bids for collective delivery of legal services with respect to the legal
15 matter.

In another embodiment, the present invention provides a method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising posting information concerning different legal matters for a client as a package of legal matters on a network resource residing on the global computer
20 network, accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the package from network users, and permitting different network users to pool bids for collective delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter.

In a further embodiment, the present invention provides a method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the
25 method comprising posting information concerning different legal matters from different clients as a pool of legal matters on a network resource residing on the global computer network, and accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the pool from network users, and permitting different network users to pool bids for collective delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter.

In another embodiment, the present invention provides a method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising posting information concerning legal matters on a network resource residing on the global computer network, accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter from network users, and excluding at least some of the network users from access to selected portions information and from submission of bids with respect to selected legal matters.

In an added embodiment, the present invention provides a method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising posting information concerning a patent-related legal matter on a network resource residing on the global computer network, wherein the information includes at least one of links to an invention disclosure, prior art, related patents, and a web site associated with the prospective client, and accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter from network users.

In a further embodiment, the present invention provides a method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for intellectual property legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising posting information concerning an intellectual property legal matter on a network resource residing on the global computer network, and soliciting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the intellectual property legal matter from network users.

Other advantages, features, and embodiments of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description and claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a system for facilitating procurement of legal services using a bid process conducted via a global computing network;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram illustrating the management and generation of legal matter information in the system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a diagram of a web page illustrating a categorization of legal matters into practice areas;

FIG. 4 is a diagram of a web page illustrating categorization of a practice area into different sub-categories;

FIG. 5 is a diagram of a web page illustrating categorization of a sub-category into different legal service tasks;

5 FIG. 6 is a diagram of a web page illustrating categorization of a legal service tasks into a technology area;

FIG. 7 is a diagram of a web page illustrating a listing of legal matters in a particular technology area;

10 FIG. 8 is a diagram of a web page containing descriptive information for a particular legal matter;

FIG. 9 is a diagram of a web page as shown in FIG. 8 with display of active bidding information;

FIG. 10 is a diagram of a web page containing bid history information;

15 FIG. 11 is a flow diagram illustrating submission of a legal matter for the bidding process;

FIG. 12 is a flow diagram illustrating definition of a bidding access profile for a network user;

FIG. 13 is a flow diagram illustrating the execution of a bid process for selection of legal representatives;

20 FIG. 14 is a flow diagram illustrating application of an access profile to limit access to particular bid items by legal representatives;

FIG. 15 is a flow diagram illustrating packaging of bid items by a client;

FIG. 16 is a flow diagram illustrating pooling of bid items by two or more clients;

25 FIG. 17 is a flow diagram illustrating pooling of bids by two or more legal representatives; and

FIG. 18 is a block diagram illustrating a system for uploading information from a client to a bid infomediary.

Like reference numbers and designations in the various drawings indicate like elements.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating a system 10 for facilitating procurement of legal services via a global computer network, such as the world wide web 12. System 10 can be used to practice methods for facilitating procurement of legal services via a global computer network. As shown in FIG. 1, system 10 may include a number of user computers 14, 16, 18, 20, a web server 22, a database server 24, a legal matter database 26, and an access profile database 28. Web server 22, database server 24, legal matter database 26, and access profile database 28 together form bid infomediary 27. User computers 14, 16, 18, 20 and server 22 are connected via world wide web 12. Web server 22 administers a bid process for legal services, facilitating interaction between clients and legal representatives.

Web server 22 may take the form of a single web server or multiple web servers, and may execute server page scripts. The scripts can be written as Active Server Pages (ASP) or in other server based scripting languages such as CGI. ASP is bundled with the Microsoft Internet Information Server. ASP code is mixed within HTML in a web page and does not need to be compiled separately. Accordingly, ASP commands can be simply added to pages executed by web server 22 to modify its operation. ASP is especially useful in building database driven websites. In particular, ASP can allow browser users to manipulate databases, e.g., view, edit, and manage, from any browser using HTML and active data objects, and allow HTML web pages to generate database updates.

In operation, web server 22 interacts with database server 24 to provide network users with access to legal matter information contained in a relational database 26. Web server 22 assembles the necessary content for web pages requested by users, and accepts information from users for addition to database 26. Database server 24 may be any type of server, and simply requires an OLEDB or ODBC driver for interaction with web server 22. In response to queries from web server 22, database server 24 locates appropriate records within database 26. An access profile database 28 defines access profiles that limit the scope of information available to particular network users.

Computers 14, 16, 18, 20 may take the form of personal computers, Macintosh computers, workstations, handheld computing devices, or the like, equipped with telecommunications services for access to network 12. Computers 14, 16, 18, 20 can be connected to network 12 directly or via an internet service provider, and communicate
5 using a network protocol such as TCP/IP. Each computer 14, 16, 18, 20 executes a viewing application such as a web browser 30 to access resources residing on other computers attached to network 12. In particular, web browser 30 permits a network user to view HTML web pages generated by web server 22.

In system 10, network users include legal clients and legal representatives who
10 desire to participate in an active bidding process for the procurement and delivery of legal services. The number of network users in system 10 can be virtually unlimited, although system operation may be subject to bandwidth limitations of server 22 and network 12. Legal clients situated at computers 14, 16, 18, 20 submit information to web server 22 via network 12, and view information pertaining to bid status. Legal representatives, such as
15 law firms, individual attorneys, or their agents, view legal matter information provided by web server 22 and submit bids for delivery of legal services with respect to particular legal matters.

Each legal matter record in database 26 includes information describing a particular legal matter for which bids will be accepted. The information may include the
20 identity of the client seeking legal services, the identity of any adverse parties, a detailed description of the matter, a desired completion date, and a maximum opening bid. The level of specificity and volume of information will vary according to the type of legal matter, but should assist potential bidders in assessing the scope and substance of the matter. If a particular legal matter involves preparation of a patent application, for
25 example, the information may include an invention disclosure, inventor's identities, drawings, prior art, and related patents, as well as web sites associated with the client, pertinent products, and competitors.

The information can be presented in a text or graphic format, and may include hypertext links to each informational item. Also, the information may include
30 downloadable files, e.g., in PDF format, that convey additional information. Examples of

documents that can be conveyed to network users as downloadable files are invention disclosures, drawings, briefs, opinions, and the like. Publicly available information can be obtained by simply linking to a publicly accessible web site. In the case of U.S. prior art patents, for example, the web page may include a link to the United States Patent and Trademark Office web page at www.uspto.gov. Additional prior art can be obtained by linking to web sites associated with other national patent offices.

For submission of a legal matter, a client accesses web server 22 and selects an appropriate web page. Web server 22 then kicks off a series of interactive web pages requesting user input. A first web page, for example, may request the entry of the client name, a title for the legal matter, and perhaps a brief description or categorization of the matter, e.g., litigation or counseling. Subsequent web pages may request entry of a maximum bid price, a desired completion date, and adverse parties. Other web pages may provide a dialog that prompts the user to define an access profile for the legal matter, as will be described. Further, another web page may prompt the user for any uploadable files that describe the legal matter in greater detail. The files are uploaded to the web server or, alternatively, could be uploaded to an ftp server. The dialog driven by the web pages can be aided by conventional input media such as check boxes, radio buttons, text entry boxes, and the like.

FIG. 2 is a block diagram illustrating management and generation of legal matter information in system 10. Upon receipt of legal matter information from a client, web server 22 interacts with database server 24 to create a record for incorporation in legal matter database 26. Web server 22 provides the information to file server 29, which then stores the information in an archive 31 for later retrieval. File server 29 may store several different files for a single legal matter record, particularly when additional files are uploaded to web server 22 by the client. When a user requests access to the information, web server 22 interacts with database server 24 to retrieve the pertinent legal matter record from database 26 and obtain the addresses of pertinent files stored by file server 29. Web server 22 then retrieves the files and formulates the content of the web page for viewing by the network user.

A firewall preferably is provided as a security measure. The firewall separates database server 24 and file server 29 from web server 22 to avoid unauthorized intrusions into the client information. Due to its nature as a repository of information concerning legal matters, the security and confidentiality of database 24 and file server 29 is a serious concern. To promote increased security and confidentiality of client information, web pages generated by web server 22 can be communicated to network users using public key encryption mechanisms such as SSL. Other security measures, such as the use of login accounts for network users, can provide added benefits. In preferred embodiments, however, the information provided by system 10 is accessible without extensive login procedures in order to maintain the level of convenience for which web browsers are known.

Access profile database 28 defines access profiles for legal matters and legal representatives. An access profile for a legal matter is defined by the pertinent client. An access profile for a legal representative is defined by that legal representative. An access profile serves to limit access to particular information by particular legal representatives. Database server 24 consults access profile database 28 when information is requested by a particular user. At the request of a client, an access profile may exclude certain legal representatives from access to legal matters submitted by the client. Alternatively, at the request of a legal representative, an access profile may limit the scope of information viewed by the legal representative to a desired area. For purposes of illustration, FIGS. 1 and 2 show a discrete access profile database 28. In practice, however, a separate access profile database 28 may be unnecessary. Rather, an integrated database schema that takes into account the access profiles of particular legal matters and legal representatives may be sufficient.

A client can specify an access profile for a legal matter to exclude particular network users from access to its legal matter records and participation in the bidding process. The access profile for a matter serves the basic purposes of limiting access to confidential client information to authorized legal representatives, or excluding particular legal representatives from access. In other words, the access profile may include an inclusive list of legal representatives who are authorized to bid on the matter, or an

exclusive list of legal representatives who or not. Generation of the access profile may take place as part of the process for submission of the legal matter. In this case, web server 22 may present one or more web pages that request profile information or give the user an opportunity to select a default profile that is either general to all users or
5 formulated for the particular user based on past submissions.

A legal representative also can define an access profile to limit the scope of information presented, e.g., as part of initial user registration. The access profile can be applied to the individual legal representative on a global basis, or divided into several sub-profiles that span different practice areas. A legal representative may have one sub-
10 profile that defines access for matters relating to securities law, for example, and another sub-profile that defines access for matters relating to products liability litigation. In this manner, the access provided to different legal representatives can be highly customized, and adjusted according to individual needs. The access profile for a legal representative serves two basic purposes.

15 First, the legal representative can use the access profile to limit exposure to potential ethical conflicts. To minimize potential conflicts, the legal representative may request that it not be exposed to legal matters concerning a particular party or any legal matter adverse to another party. Also, the legal representative may define the access profile to exclude particular technology or business areas already occupied by its existing
20 clients. Specific matters then can be identified for exclusion based on a client name, adverse party name, a business area, or technology area obtained from fields in the legal matter records stored in database 26.

Second, the legal representative can tailor the information to particular types of legal matters. For example, the access profile can exclude the legal representative from
25 legal matters that are outside of its core practice areas. An intellectual property firm may request exclusion from matters involving securities trading. Similarly, a securities firm may request exclusion from matters involving products liability. Also, some legal representatives may not be interested in taking on smaller matters. Accordingly, the access profile may exclude matter with a maximum opening bid that is too low. For

example, the access profile for a large firm may exclude all matters having a maximum opening bid of less than \$20,000.

In any event, access profiles for users can be constructed to effectively keep legal representatives informed of matters in which they are interested, and uninformed of matters that are not of interest or which may cause ethical conflict dilemmas. At the same time, access profiles for legal matters can protect the client's information. To facilitate application of access profiles, default profiles may be stored for a given client and applied to all legal matters for that client unless designated otherwise. Similarly, default profiles can be stored for individual legal representatives applied to all access unless designated otherwise.

Moreover, a system administrator may formulate a set of system-wide default profiles that specify particular legal representatives for access to particular legal matters. The system administrator may designate a finite set of legal representatives to access all intellectual property matters, and another finite set to access all employment law matters. The default profiles set by the system administrator can make the presentation of information to legal representatives more efficient by limiting the bidding group to parties that are more likely to be interested. At the same time, the system administrator may select legal representatives on the basis of competence and expertise to improve the quality of the bidding group to the benefit of the client.

For purpose of illustration, FIGS. 3-9 show a hierarchy of web pages viewed by a network user in an exemplary embodiment of system 10. FIG. 3 is a diagram of a web page illustrating a categorization of legal matters into practice areas. In the example of FIG. 3, the web page is entitled "LAWBID." Upon access to web server 22, the network user may be presented with links to a web page for submission of a legal matter by a client, or for access to pending bid items, i.e., legal matters that have been posted for evaluation prior to bidding or are engaged in active bidding. As shown in FIG. 3, when a user desires access to pending bid items, web server 22 generates a web page that offers the user a choice of different legal practice categories. The listing may vary according to the user's access profile, which may exclude certain categories. The category titles are represented as hypertext links to other web pages.

Upon selection of one of the hypertext links, the user is presented with another web page devoted to the pertinent category. In the example of FIG. 3, the arrow designates user selection of the Intellectual Property category. FIG. 4 is a diagram of a web page illustrating categorization of the intellectual property practice area into different sub-categories, i.e., patents, copyrights, trademarks, and trade secrets. Examples of other categories in the intellectual property arena include matters relating to web domain names, telephone numbers, and mask work rights.

Other legal practice areas will be susceptible to similar sub-categorization. The arrow in FIG. 4 designates user selection of the patents category. FIG. 5 is a diagram of a web page illustrating categorization of a sub-category into particular legal service tasks. The practice of intellectual property is readily categorized into discrete tasks such as prosecution, litigation, rendering of opinions, and licensing. Other legal practice areas can be divided into tasks in a similar manner. Again, the listed items provide hypertext links to other web pages.

FIG. 6 is a diagram of a web page illustrating categorization of a legal service task into a technology area. Upon selection of the prosecution category, as indicated by the arrow in FIG. 5, the user views a web page that breaks the prosecution category into different technology areas. As shown in FIG. 6, the technology areas may include electrical and computer, chemical, biotech, and mechanical. Following selection of the electrical and computer link, as indicated by the arrow in FIG. 6, the user views a web page as shown in FIG. 7. In particular, FIG. 7 is a diagram of a web page illustrating a listing of legal matters in the electrical and computer technology area. Upon selection of prosecution matter "4," a "web-based auction method," submitted by Acme Corp., the user views a web page providing detailed information concerning the matter.

FIG. 8 is a diagram of a web page containing the descriptive information for prosecution matter "4." As shown in FIG. 8, the information may include a brief description of the task, i.e., prepare and file U.S. patent application. Also, the information may include an abstract that briefly describes the subject matter of the invention, an identification of the inventor or inventors, the maximum opening bid that will be accepted, the desired filing date of the patent application, and the period during which

bids will be accepted. In addition, the information may include hypertext links (indicated in FIG. 8 with an asterisk) to information provided by other resources such as documents stored by file server 29 or documents stored as web pages on other publicly accessible web sites. For example, the web page may include links to an invention disclosure document stored by file server 29, prior art and related patents stored locally or publicly accessible via other web sites, a link to the client home page and the home pages of competitors. Further, the web page may include hypertext button by which the user can trigger generation of a web page for submission of a request for further information. As also shown in FIG. 8, the page may include another button by which the user can enter the bidding process, if active.

FIG. 9 is a diagram of a web page as shown in FIG. 8 with display of active bidding information. In addition to displaying information describing the legal matter, the web page includes an indication of the current minimum, e.g., \$9,500 in FIG. 9, and a text entry box and button for submission of a bid by the present user. In the example of FIG. 9, the outstanding bid is submitted on a flat or capped fee basis. The client may specify, however, the form of the bids, i.e., flat, capped, or contingent. Thus, in other cases, the bid could take the form of a percentage of some specified contingency, such as licensing revenue, product sales, or equity in the client's company. As will be described, the client may select one of several different default contingency agreements, or upload its own for perusal by legal representatives prior to bidding. Thus, the bid may be set forth as a dollar amount or contingent percentage rate. When the contingent agreement calls for an equity stake, the rate can be applied as a weight to a number of shares identified in the agreement. In this case, detailed financial information about the client's company also may be necessary.

With further reference to FIG. 9, the current minimum bid, whether cast as a dollar amount or a percentage, can be updated by the user by refreshing the web page viewed by web browser 30. Also, following submission of a bid, the web page preferably is updated by web server 22 to reflect that bid. At the end of the bid period, the lowest bid may simply be accepted. Unlike other bid environments, however, it may not be necessary to submit a lower bid to be awarded the work. The outcome of legal services

are highly dependent on quality. Therefore, the client may reserve the option of selecting one of the legal representatives submitting a bid that is actually higher than the minimum in the interest of obtaining higher quality services.

For example, one firm may submit the lowest bid, but be less attractive to the client based on legal competence or technical expertise. Thus, the client may select one of the legal representatives submitting a higher bid. Moreover, the client may be more inclined to select a more local firm geographically. Even though acceptance of a higher bid is a possibility, the legal representatives will nevertheless be cognizant of the present low bid and engage in price competition. In some embodiments, it may be desirable to disclose the identities of the bidders. In most cases, however, concealing the bidder's identities may serve to heighten bidding anxiety and serve the client's interests in driving the price downward. In either case, except perhaps where the minimum bid is automatically accepted, it ordinarily will be desirable to disclose the bidder's identities to the client to aid in selection.

FIG. 10 is a diagram of a web page containing bid history information for viewing by a client who has submitted a legal matter for bid. As shown in FIG. 10, the bid history may identify the particular matter, and the bids received since the commencement of the bid period. The bids can be identified in terms of the amount of the bid and the legal representative submitting the bid. Also, the bids can be time- and date-stamped if desired, arranged in order of submission, or arranged in order of bid amount, either ascending or descending. The current low bid may be highlighted as shown in FIG. 10. Notably, the names of the legal representatives submitting the bids may be set forth as hypertext links (indicated by asterisks) to web pages providing additional information about the legal representatives. A user interested in a particular bid, but having insufficient knowledge of the bidder, can click on the bidder's name to access information such as a law firm's web site, a firm resume, individual attorney profiles, client lists, and the like. The bidder information can be obtained by access to web pages generated by web server 22, but more preferably by access to other publicly accessible resources on the world wide web.

FIG. 11 is a flow diagram illustrating submission of a legal matter by a client for the bidding process. The order of events illustrated in FIG. 11 is purely exemplary. Submission preferably is guided by a series of web pages generated by web server 22 that query the client for appropriate information. In another embodiment, the client may submit one or more legal matters using an ftp session initiated by the client with an ftp server residing in system 10. Submission of legal matters to web server 22 will be described with respect to FIG. 11.

As indicated by block 32, the client first selects a legal matter type, which may involve navigation through a hierarchy of practice areas, sub-practice areas, legal service tasks, and so forth. Following selection of the matter type, the user enters a title and abstract for the matter, as indicated by block 34. The abstract can be entered manually or uploaded to web server 22. Next, as indicated by block 36, the client submits a number of background links or documents that describe the matter in greater detail. For example, the user may be prompted to upload documents such as briefs, legal memoranda, invention disclosures, and the like. Also, the user may identify documents residing on publicly accessible web resources, such as government and regulatory web sites. For a patent example, the user may submit links to particular patents residing on patent office web pages.

As further shown in FIG. 11, the client then may set the access profile for the particular legal matter, for example, by selecting desired legal representatives (block 38) and selecting excluded legal representatives (block 40). The desired legal representatives will be admitted access to the legal matter information and the bidding process, whereas the excluded legal representatives will not. Alternatively, the client may choose not to enter desired and excluded representatives, and instead select a default access profile set by the system administrator. Other access limitations are conceivable, such as limitations based on geography and firm size. As indicated by block 42, the client may enter a desired completion date for the legal matter. For some legal matters, such as litigation, the completion date may be open-ended. For others, such as patent application filing, the completion date may be critical.

Next, the client specifies whether the matter is to be bid on a flat fee, capped (or "maximum fee"), or contingent basis, as indicated by block 44. If contingent representation is desired, the client selects the desired contingent terms, as indicated by block 46. The client may select from one of several standard contingent representation agreements provided for viewing by the client via web server 22. Alternatively, the client
5 may upload its own contingent agreement to web server 22, in which case a link to the contingent agreement will be added to the matter web page for viewing by bidders. In either case, the bids are to be submitted in the specified format, and bound by the terms of the contingency agreement.

10 Upon selection of contingent terms or election of a flat or capped fee arrangement, the client is prompted to enter the maximum opening bid, as indicated by block 48. During the bid process, bids that exceed the maximum opening bid are not accepted. For each item of information, web server 22 interacts with database server 24 and file server 29 to create legal matter records and archive the information, respectively.
15 The legal matter information can be made available to legal representatives immediately, or held pending the start of an optional evaluation period that precedes the bidding period. Web server 22 may permit the client to revise, update, or supplement the legal matter information over time, particularly following a request by bidders for additional information. In this case, web server 22 may proactively advise the client of the
20 information request in an automated manner, e.g., by sending an e-mail or page.

FIG. 12 is a flow diagram illustrating definition of an access profile for a legal representative. Like the submission of a legal matter by a client, the legal representative preferably defines the access profile by interaction with web pages generated by web server 22. Again, the order of events shown in FIG. 12 is exemplary only. The legal
25 representative first accesses a web page generated by web server 22, which could be entitled user account, user preferences, or the like. The legal representative may simply select a default access profile that exposes the legal representative to a wide array of legal matters. Alternatively, the legal representative may seek to limit conflict exposure and/or access to extraneous practice areas by entering a set of adverse parties, as indicated by
30 block 50, and/or excluded practice areas, as indicated by block 52. An attorney focused

primarily on energy law, for example, may choose to exclude several practice areas such as intellectual property, securities, tax, and others.

Next, the legal representative may exclude matters involving representation of particular clients (block 54) or representation against particular clients (block 56) to minimize exposure to confidential information that could create ethical conflicts. Also, the legal representative may desire to limit its access in a geographical sense, as indicated by block 57. Many firms have practices that are national in scope, and employ attorneys that are admitted to practice in many jurisdictions. Other firms may desire to focus in particular geographic area. Further, as indicated by block 58, many firms may choose to forego legal matters that do not meet a desired monetary threshold. In particular, large firms may seek to minimize consumption of so-called "conflict space" by small matters that do not offer commensurate revenue. Many smaller firms will have no difficulty taking on such matters, and may not impose a monetary threshold.

As indicated by block 59, the legal representative may complete the access profile by uploading information to web server 22, such as firm resumes, attorney profiles, and client lists. The information can be uploaded as text or PDF documents for storage by file server 29, or as hypertext documents with links to copies on other resources such as the web site maintained by the pertinent firm. Following receipt of the necessary information, web server 22 generates the access profile for the legal representative, as indicated in block 60. Web server 22 interacts with database server 24 to create a record in access profile database 28, or otherwise integrates the information into the schema of legal matter database 26. The access profile could be represented in a cookie passed to the network user. Users routinely delete cookies, however, making storage of the profiles by profile database 28 more robust.

FIG. 13 is a flow diagram illustrating the execution of a bid process for selection of legal representatives. Upon receipt of a request to view bid items, as indicated by block 62, web server 22 interacts with database server 24 to identify the particular legal representative and retrieve the pertinent access profile, as indicated by block 64. The legal representative can be identified, for example, by a cookie or other device passed to computer 14, 16, 18, 20 used previously by the legal representative to access web server

22, or based on legal representative log-in access. Based on the access profile, web server retrieves a number of authorized bid items (block 66), i.e., bid items consistent with the access profile, defined by legal matter records residing on database 26. The bid items may be further limited by the legal representative's selection of particular categories and sub-categories of bid items during navigation of the web pages generated by web server 22. The number of options listed on each web page may be limited, however, by the access profile.

As indicated by block 68, web server generates a web page that displays the pending bid items for evaluation by the legal representative. The legal representative may view the information associated with each of the bid items by hypertext navigation. Also, for each bid item, the legal representative may enter a request for further information that is processed by web server 22, as indicated by block 70. Upon notification of the client and receipt of the requested information, web server 22 updates the information and makes it available to the legal representative, as indicated by block 72. The legal representative may periodically visit and refresh the pertinent web page to check for the added information. Alternatively, web server 22 may notify the user, via email or web page posting, when the information has been added.

After an evaluation period, if any, has elapsed, web server 22 generates an active bid page that can be accessed by legal representatives, as indicated by block 74. Again, web server 22 can be configured to notify interested legal representatives when bidding opens. During the bidding process, web server 22 accumulates bids from legal representatives, as indicated by block 76, and posts the current low bid on the active bid page accessed by the legal representatives, as indicated by block 78. Web server 22 continuously accepts bids, as indicated by loop 80, until the bid period elapses, as indicated by block 81. At that time, the legal representative with the lowest bid is awarded the project, or the client has the opportunity to select the most attractive bid. Upon selection of the legal representative, web server 22 sends a notification to the legal representative. Optionally, web server 22 may generate an authorization message on behalf of the client that authorizes the legal representative to proceed in handling the legal matter and forwards any additional information needed to handle the matter.

FIG. 14 is a flow diagram illustrating application of an access profile to limit access to particular bid items by legal representatives. As indicated by blocks 82 and 84, respectively, upon receipt of request for bid item access, web server 22 identifies the legal representative and retrieves the appropriate access profile information. When the legal representative requests access to a particular bid item or group of bid items, web server 22 applies the access profile for the bid item, i.e., the particular legal matter, and the access profile for the legal representative to determine whether viewing of the bid item is authorized. As indicated by block 86, web server 22 retrieves the bid item(s) and applies the access profile. For example, it is determined whether the matter (a) involves an adverse client or is against an existing client, as indicated by block 88, (b) resides outside of the specified practice areas, as indicated by block 90, (c) presents a subject matter conflict in a particular business or technology area, as indicated by block 92, (d) is outside of a specified geographic area, as indicated by block 94, (e) the bid item provides a maximum opening bid that is too low, as indicated by block 96, or (f) the legal representative has been specified by the client as an excluded legal representative, as indicated by block 97.

If any of the above conditions apply, then the legal representative is excluded from access to the bid item, as indicated by block 98. Otherwise, web server 22 generates a web page with the appropriate content for viewing by the legal representative. If no other bids are requested, as indicated by block 100, the process is complete. If other bids are requested, the process is repeated, as indicated by loop 102. For purposes of illustration, application of the access profiles has been described as being performed in real time following a request for access to a bid item. More preferably, however, the process will be executed in advance for all bid items, resulting in annotation of the legal matter records in database 26 to quickly indicate whether access is appropriate.

FIG. 15 is a flow diagram illustrating packaging of bid items by a client. Packaging of separate legal matters may be desirable in the interest of placing a number of related matters with a single legal representative. Alternatively, distinct or unrelated legal matters can be combined for the convenience of dealing with a single legal representative. Bid item packaging also will increase the overall value of the project,

thereby attracting a larger number of legal representatives. In particular, by packaging bid items, a smaller client may obtain the services of larger firms that ordinarily refuse small projects.

Related matters could be combined, for example, on the basis of similarity of legal theory, facts, or technology. As one example, preparation of a number of different patent applications involving similar technology can be packaged together. Indeed, a company may desire to place all of its work with a single legal representative. In this case, the presentation of specific bid items may be disfavored. Instead, a client may submit general information concerning discrete matters, such as patent applications, and seek bids for future legal services on per application basis during a specified service period, and may specify a minimum number of applications. As an illustration, the client could submit a bid item package of one-hundred future applications to be handled over a two-year period, and then seek bids characterized as a flat fee or capped fee for each application filed.

When existing legal matters are packaged, web server 22 can be arranged to accept them on an individual basis and then later package them, or accept them together as a single legal matter. For example, a client may submit a single body of information for several legal matters, e.g., invention disclosure, prior art, and other information for several patent applications. Alternatively, the client may submit individual legal matters and later request that they be linked and submitted for bid as a package. In particular, as shown in FIG. 15, a client may submit a packaging request to web server 22, as indicated by block 103. In response, web server 22 generates a series of web pages that prompt the client for identification of particular legal matter records.

Web server 22 may display the pending legal matters for the respective client, for example, and permit "check-box" selection of individual matters for packaging. Following selection, web server 22 may link the matter records in database 26 associated with the specified legal matters, as indicated by block 105. For example, web server 22 may associate the records in the tables maintained by database server 24. In response to requests from legal representatives, web server 22 then posts information for the

packaged bid items together, as indicated by block 107. In this manner, the packaged bid items can be displayed together on a single web page for evaluation by bidders.

FIG. 16 is a flow diagram illustrating pooling of bid items by two or more clients. System 10 may allow clients to pool their legal matters with one another, increasing the volume of overall work up for bid. Pooling may give clients more leverage and attract lower bids on the basis of increased volume. To enable pooling of bids, particular clients may agree to exchange information for review purposes, e.g., by allowing access to legal matter records contained in database 26. For example, two or more different universities may agree to exchange information in a particular technology area for purposes of obtaining bids for patent applications directed to related technologies. In most cases, an information exchange will not be necessary. Instead, it may be sufficient to simply exchange information concerning the practice area to which the matters of two or more different clients relate. As an example, several small companies may elect to pool bid items directed to legal matters involving employment law, and thereby provide a larger volume of work to attract larger firms. Web server 22 may be arranged to generate a web page for all clients that sets forth a directory of clients who are amenable to pooling.

Upon identification of one or more different clients for potential pooling, a client submits a proposed matter pooling request to web server 22, as indicated by block 104. In response, web server 22 generates a message, e.g., an email or web page posting, that communicates the request to the prospective pooling clients, as indicated by block 106. If the prospective pooling clients decline the proposal, in the operation indicated by block 108, web server 22 posts the bid items individually, as indicated by block 112. If the proposal is accepted, however, web server 22 posts the bid items as a pool for which a single bid will be accepted, as indicated by block 110. In this case, web server 22 interacts with database server 24 to link the various legal matter records pertaining to the pooled bid items. Web server 22 subsequently generates a web page for review by legal representatives that contains links to each of the bid items. The legal representative submitting the winning bid is then entitled to handle all of the pooled legal matters.

FIG. 17 is a flow diagram illustrating pooling of bids by two or more legal representatives. System 10 may permit legal representatives to pool bids with respect to

an individual bid item or bid item package or pool. When a large package of legal matters is posted for bidding, smaller firms may pool their bids even if their individual resources are insufficient to handle the entire project. With bid pooling, small firms can compete for larger projects without the need to increase staffing. Instead, two or more
5 small firms agree to divide the work responsibilities and revenue between them. Thus, bid pooling does not refer to summing of multiple bids submitted by different legal representatives. Indeed, the bid process is designed to promote lower bids. Instead, bid pooling as described herein refers to summing of the professional resources of several legal representatives and the submission of a collective bid.

10 The firms that pool their bids may have preexisting relationships, or engage in pooling on an ad-hoc basis. In either case, the legal representatives submit a collective bid, and may communicate by email, telephone, or otherwise in setting or changing the bid during the bid process. As indicated by block 114, web server 22 accepts a proposed bid pooling request from an individual legal representative. The request may simply
15 identify one or more other legal representatives to participate in the proposed pool and the bid item or bid item package or pool to which the pool will apply. Web server 22 then communicates the request to the other legal representatives, e.g., by email or page, as indicated by block 116. If the proposed pool is acceptable, indicated by block 118, the legal representatives are identified as a pool with respect to a particular bid item or bid
20 item package or pool, as indicated by block 120. If the proposed pool is not acceptable, the pool is declined, as indicated by block 122. In this case, the legal representatives are left to bid on an individual basis.

FIG. 18 is a block diagram illustrating a system for uploading legal matter information from a client to a bid infomediary. In the system of FIG. 18, clients may
25 submit legal matter information to web server 22 via web browser 30. In particular, clients may submit individual legal matters and packages by navigating a series of web pages generated by web server 22 for submission of the necessary information. Alternatively, submission of legal matter information can be conducted on a more systematic basis. As shown in FIG. 18, for example, clients can be equipped with an
30 internal intranet system 124 that includes one or more client computers 130, 132 with

web browser and a legal asset control center application 128 that collects legal matter information from clients, maintains and updates the information, and uploads information to legal bid infomediary 27 on an automated basis.

With further reference to FIG. 18, bid infomediary 27 may include not only web
5 server 22 for interaction with clients via http protocol, but also an ftp server 134 for
automated interaction with asset control center 128. Each server 22, 134 interacts with
database server 24 to add or modify information for the bid process. Asset control center
128 may include an intranet server that generates web pages for viewing by users situated
at computers 130, 132. For submission of legal matters, for example, the intranet server
10 may generate web pages analogous to those generated by web server 22 for submission of
legal records via the internet. Asset control center 128 also includes a database, database
server, and file server for local storage of the legal information submitted by the client's
individual users. On a regular basis, or as directed by a client user, asset control centers
opens an ftp session with ftp server 134 to transfer new legal matter information or
15 update or supplement legal matter information previously uploaded to the ftp server.

On the basis of the uploaded information, bid infomediary 27 creates or updates
legal matter records defining bid items. Thus, intranet system 124 and asset control
center 128 provide a systematic mechanism for uploading information for several legal
matters en masse or for individual legal matters on a selective basis. One advantage of
20 this approach is that the legal matter information may be maintained by asset control
center 128 for other reasons than entering the bid process. In particular, a larger body of
legal matter information may be accessed by client users for purposes of docketing,
portfolio management, planning and the like. Selected legal matters then may be
earmarked by clients for submission to the bid process. As further shown in FIG. 18,
25 along with intranet access and ftp uploads, client users still may have the option of
submitting legal matter information via the internet.

The foregoing detailed description has been provided for a better understanding of
the invention and is for exemplary purposes only. Modifications may be apparent to
those skilled in the art without deviating from the spirit and scope of the appended
30 claims.

CLAIMS:

1. A method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal
5 services via a global computer network, the method comprising:
 providing network users with access to information concerning a legal matter on a
network resource residing on the global computer network; and
 accepting bids from network users for delivery of legal services with respect to
the legal matter.
- 10 2. A method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal
services via a global computer network, the method comprising:
 posting information concerning different legal matters for a client as a package of
legal matters on a network resource residing on the global computer network; and
15 accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the package from
network users.
3. A method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal
services via a global computer network, the method comprising:
20 posting information concerning different legal matters from different clients as a
pool of legal matters on a network resource residing on the global computer network; and
 accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the pool of legal
matters from network users.
- 25 4. A method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal
services via a global computer network, the method comprising:
 posting information concerning a legal matter on a network resource residing on
the global computer network; and
 accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the legal from network
30 users; and

permitting different network users to submit collective bids for collective delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter.

- 5 5. A method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising:
- posting information concerning different legal matters for a client as a package of legal matters on a network resource residing on the global computer network;
- accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the package from network users; and
- 10 permitting different network users to pool bids for collective delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter.

6. A method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising:
- 15 posting information concerning different legal matters from different clients as a pool of legal matters on a network resource residing on the global computer network; and
- accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the pool from network users; and
- permitting different network users to pool bids for collective delivery of legal
- 20 services with respect to the legal matter.

7. A method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising:
- posting information concerning legal matters on a network resource residing on
- 25 the global computer network; and
- accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter from network users;
- excluding at least some of the network users from access to selected portions information and from submission of bids with respect to selected legal matters.

30

8. A method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising:

- posting information concerning a patent-related legal matter on a network resource residing on the global computer network, wherein the information includes at least one of links to an invention disclosure, prior art, related patents, and a web site associated with the prospective client; and
- accepting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the legal matter from network users.

10 9. A method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for intellectual property legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising:

- posting information concerning an intellectual property legal matter on a network resource residing on the global computer network; and
- soliciting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the intellectual property legal matter from network users.

10. A method for facilitating selection of legal representatives for intellectual property legal services via a global computer network, the method comprising:

- presenting information concerning an intellectual property legal matter on a network resource residing on the global computer network;
- gathering at least some of the information concerning the legal matter from one or more publicly accessible databases residing on the global computer network;
- soliciting bids for delivery of legal services with respect to the intellectual property legal matter from network users;
- accepting one of the bids; and
- communicating additional information concerning the intellectual property legal matter to the legal representative who submitted the bid to facilitate handling of the matter.

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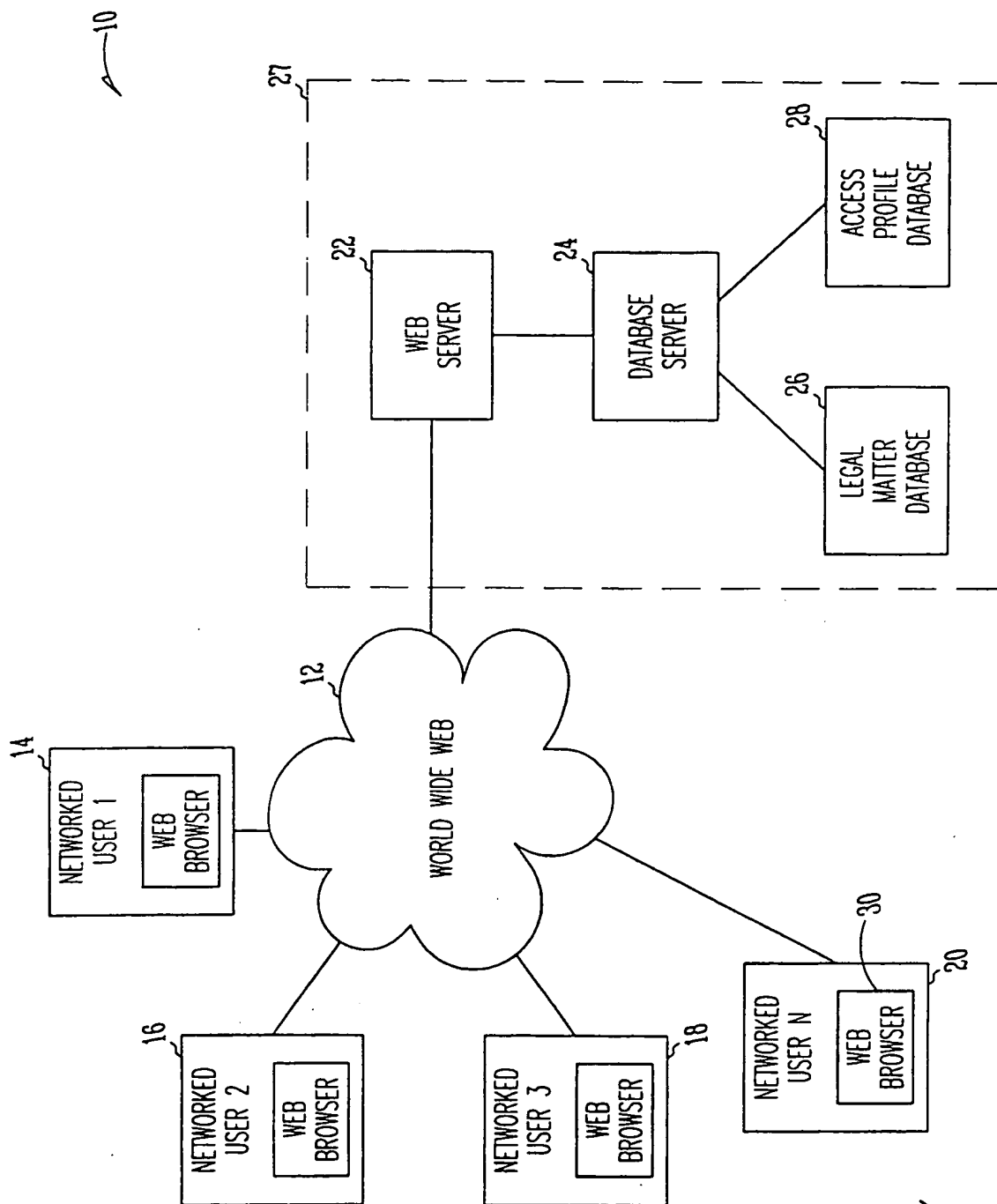
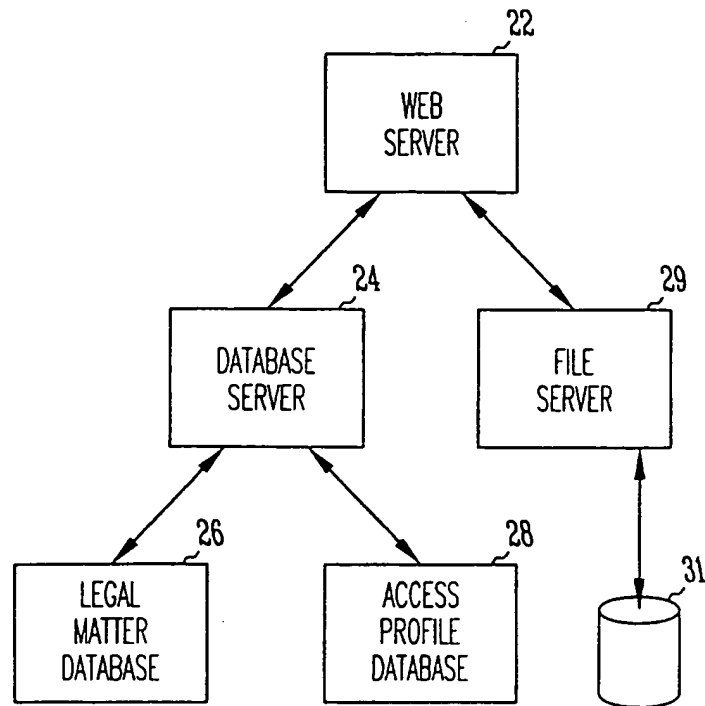
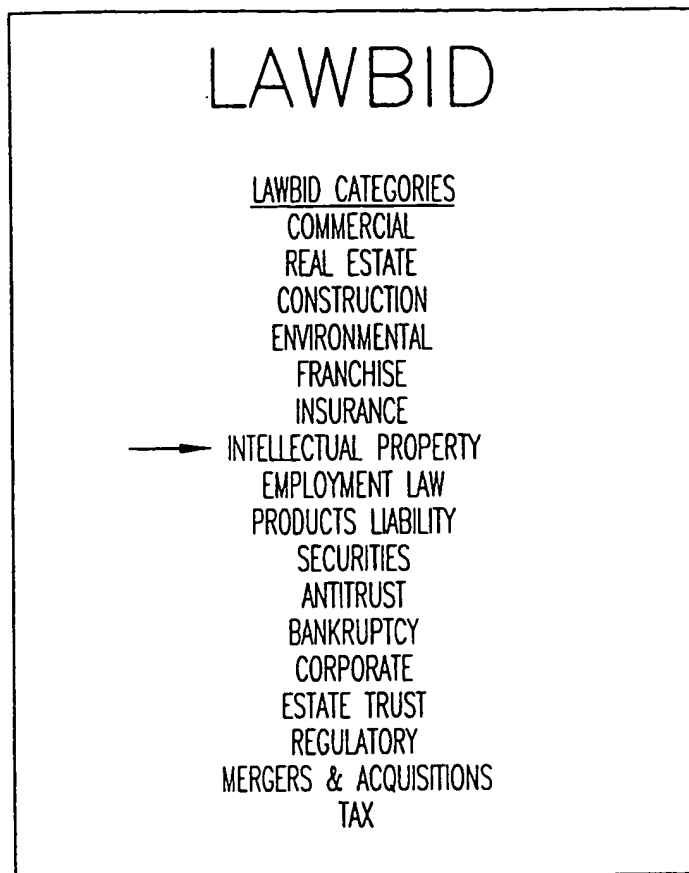
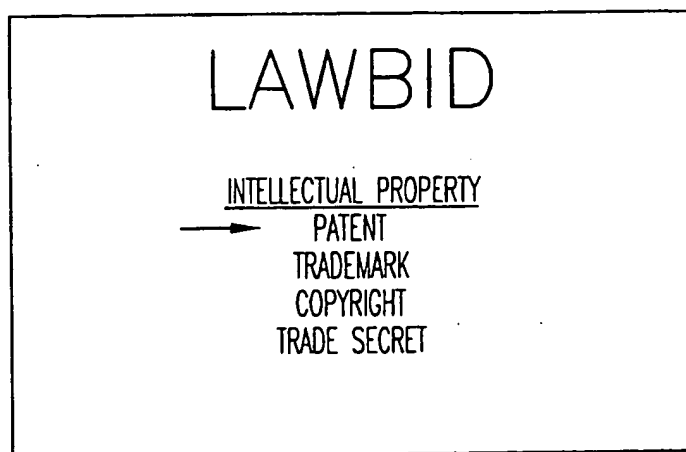


Fig. 1

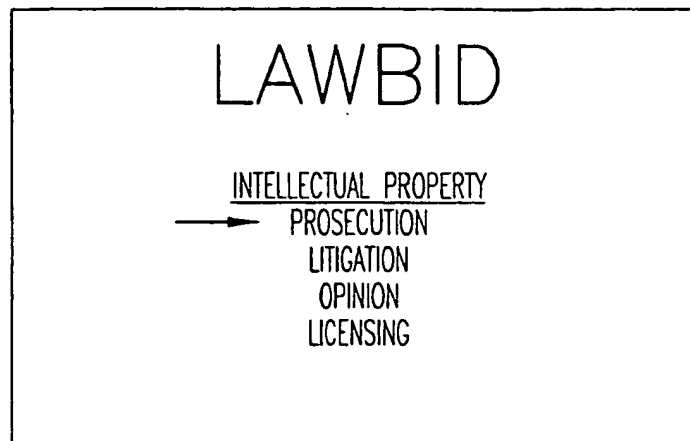
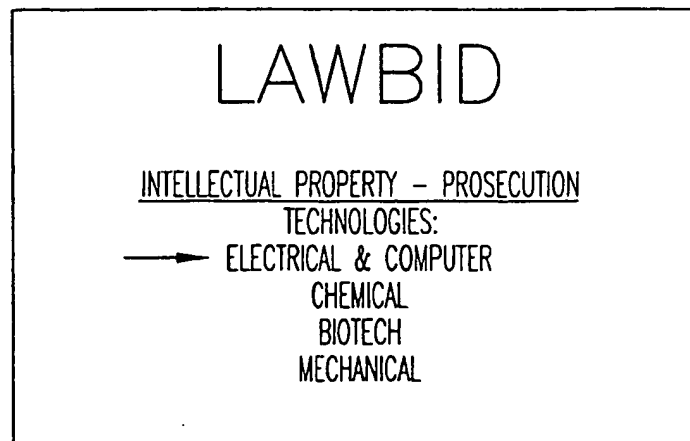
2/13

*Fig. 2*

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*Fig. 3**Fig. 4*

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*Fig. 5**Fig. 6*

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LAWBID

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY - PROSECUTION-ELECTRICAL & COMPUTER

1. ABC CORP., CMOS MEMORY
2. ABC CORP., SOLID STATE X-RAY DETECTOR
3. XYZ CORP., COMPUTER TELEPHONY SYSTEM
4. ACME CORP., WEB-BASED AUCTION METHOD ←
5. AJAX CORP., CARDIAC PACEMAKER
6. XYZ CORP., ON-LINE DISTRIBUTION OF SOFTWARE

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Fig. 7

LAWBID

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY - PROSECUTION-ELECTRICAL & COMPUTERACME CORP., WEB-BASED AUCTION METHOD

TASK: PREPARE AND FILE U.S. PATENT APPLICATION.

ABSTRACT: A WEB-BASED METHOD FOR CONDUCTING AN AUCTION...

INVENTOR(S): JUDY JONES

MAXIMUM BID: \$15,000

FILING DATE: MARCH 10, 2000

BID PERIOD: DECEMBER 2 TO DECEMBER 10, 1999

*INVENTION DISCLOSURE

*PRIOR ART

*RELATED PATENTS

*ACME HOME PAGE

*COMPETITORS

*REQUEST MORE INFORMATION

*ENTER BIDDING

Fig. 8

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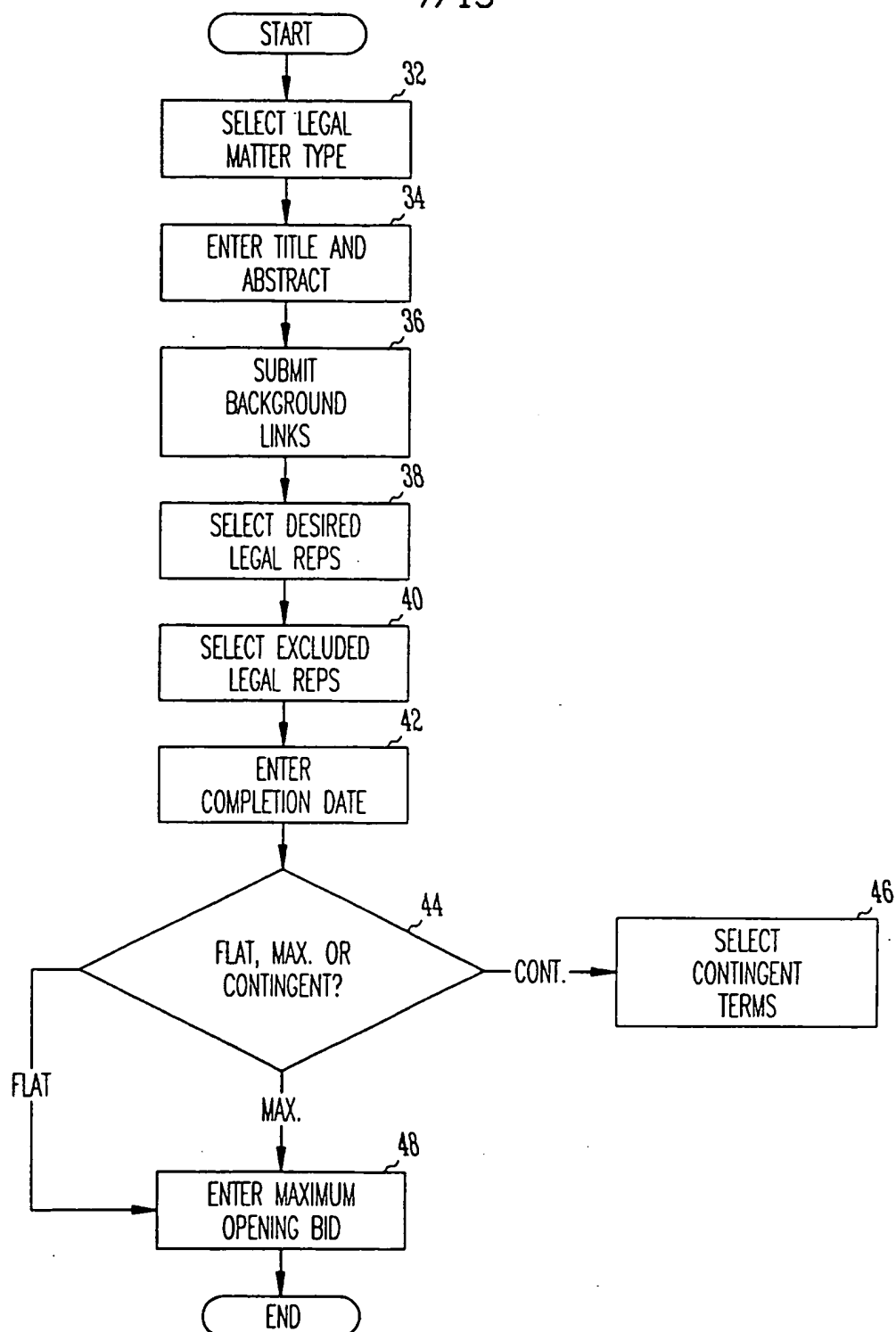
LAWBID	
BIDDING IN PROGRESS	
ACME CORP., WEB-BASED AUCTION METHOD	
TASK: PREPARE AND FILE U.S. PATENT APPLICATION.	
ABSTRACT: A WEB-BASED METHOD FOR CONDUCTING AN AUCTION...	
INVENTOR(S): JUDY JONES	
MAXIMUM BID: \$15,000	
FILING DATE: MARCH 10, 2000	
BID PERIOD: DECEMBER 2 TO DECEMBER 10, 1999	
*INVENTION DISCLOSURE	
*PRIOR ART	
*RELATED PATENTS	
*ACME HOME PAGE	
*COMPETITORS	
*REQUEST MORE INFORMATION	
*ENTER AUCTION	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <p>CURRENT BID: \$9,500</p> <p>YOUR BID: <input style="width: 50px;" type="text" value="\$9,000"/></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input type="button" value="SUBMIT"/></p> </div>	

Fig. 9

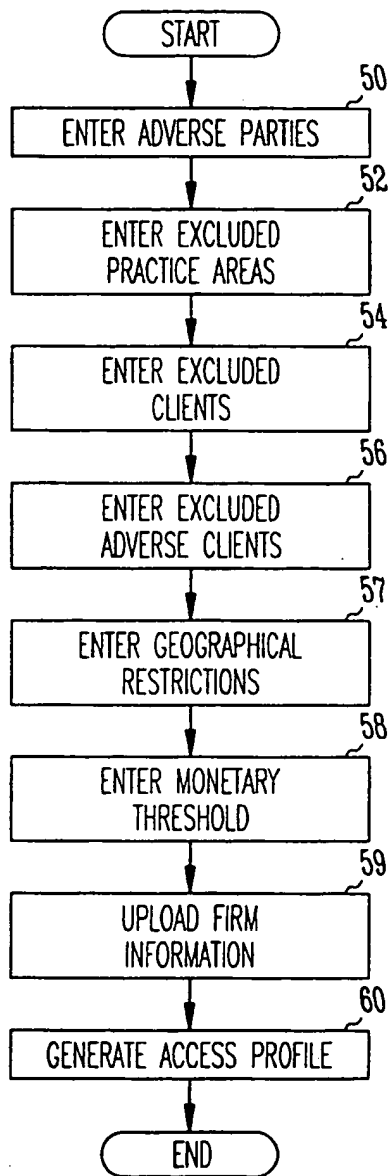
LAWBID											
BIDDING IN PROGRESS											
ACME CORP., WEB-BASED AUCTION METHOD											
BID HISTORY:	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">*SMITH, SMITH & SMITH</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px 10px;">\$9,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">*JONES, JONES & JONES</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px 10px;">\$10,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">*SMITH, JONES, & SMITH</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px 10px;">\$11,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">*JONES, SMITH & JONES</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px 10px;">\$12,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">*SMITH & JONES</td> <td style="text-align: right; padding: 2px 10px;">\$12,750</td> </tr> </table>	*SMITH, SMITH & SMITH	\$9,500	*JONES, JONES & JONES	\$10,500	*SMITH, JONES, & SMITH	\$11,000	*JONES, SMITH & JONES	\$12,500	*SMITH & JONES	\$12,750
*SMITH, SMITH & SMITH	\$9,500										
*JONES, JONES & JONES	\$10,500										
*SMITH, JONES, & SMITH	\$11,000										
*JONES, SMITH & JONES	\$12,500										
*SMITH & JONES	\$12,750										
CURRENT LOW BID: \$9,500											

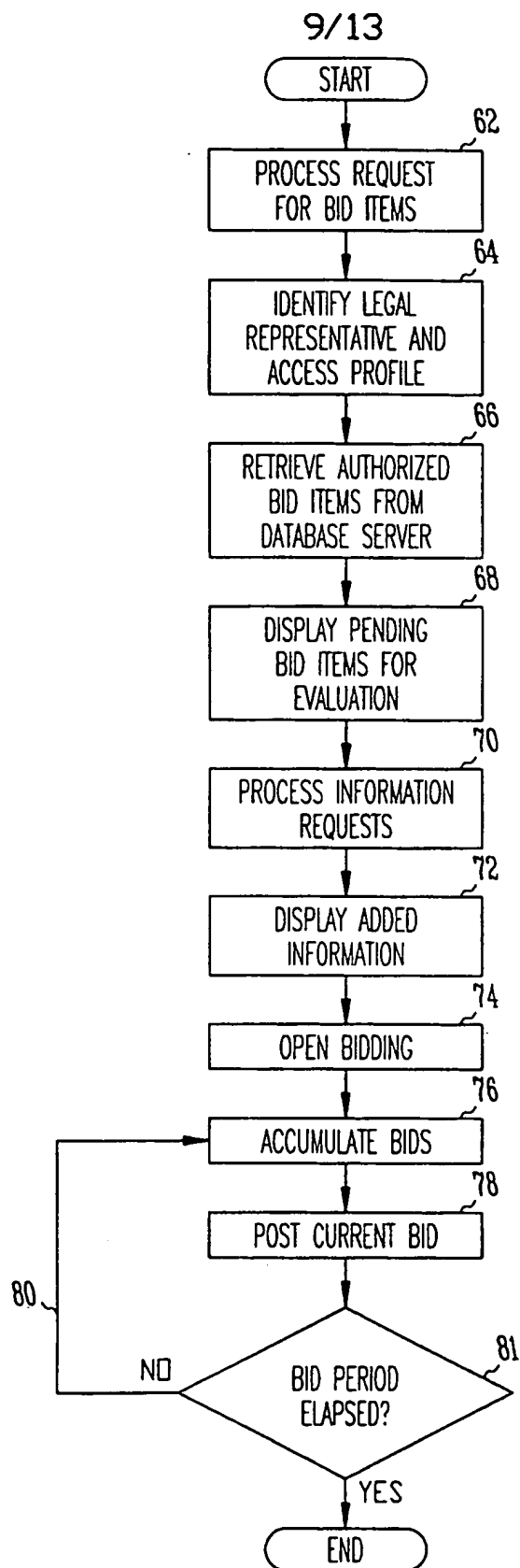
Fig. 10

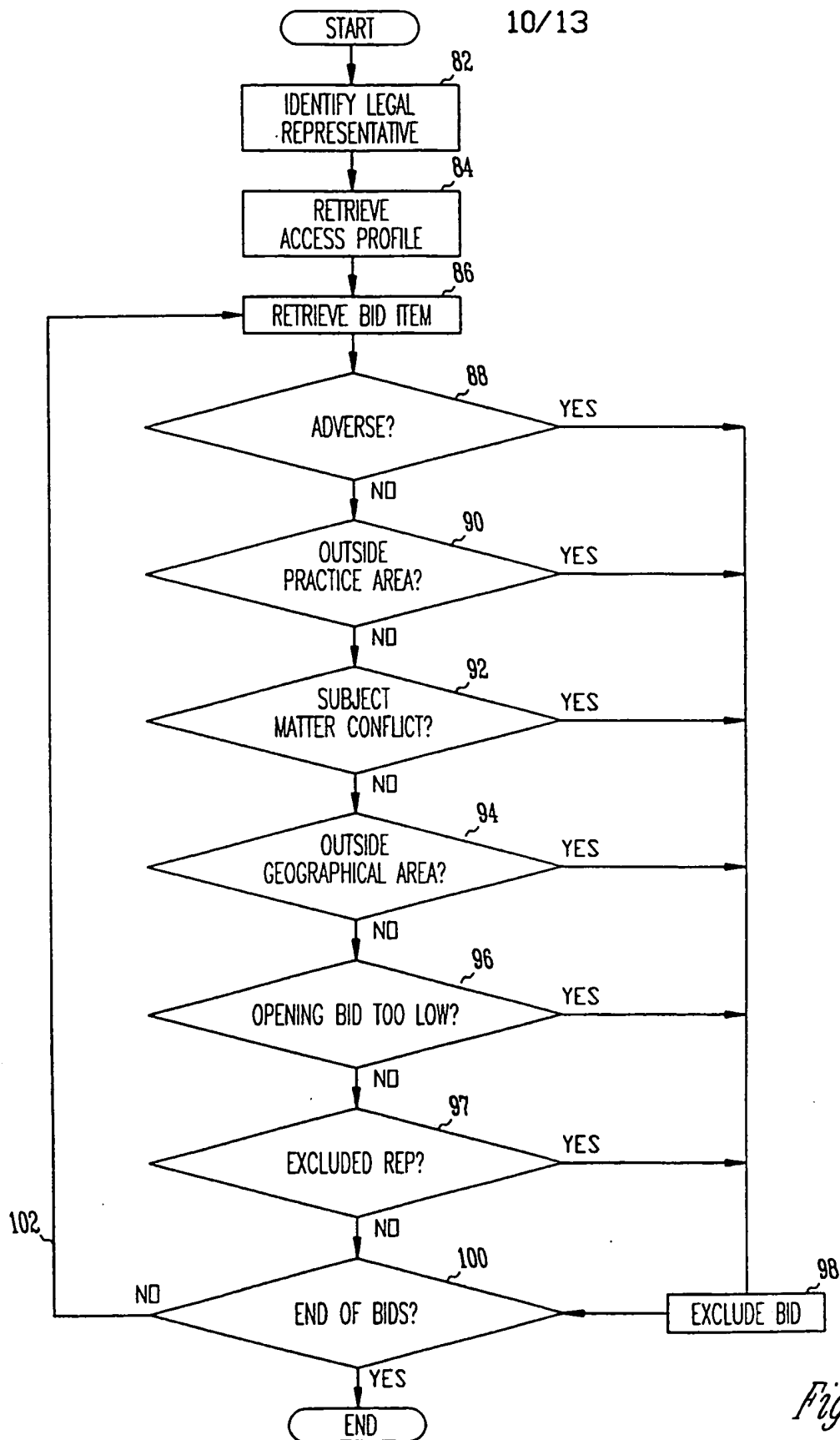
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*Fig. 11*

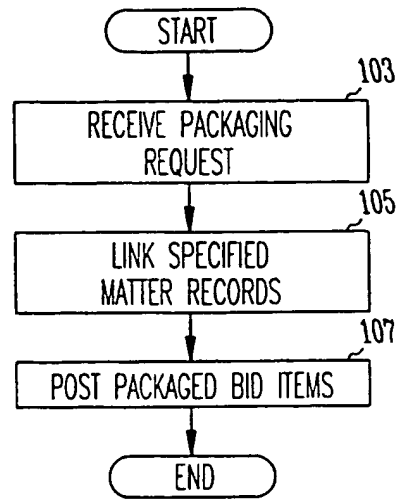
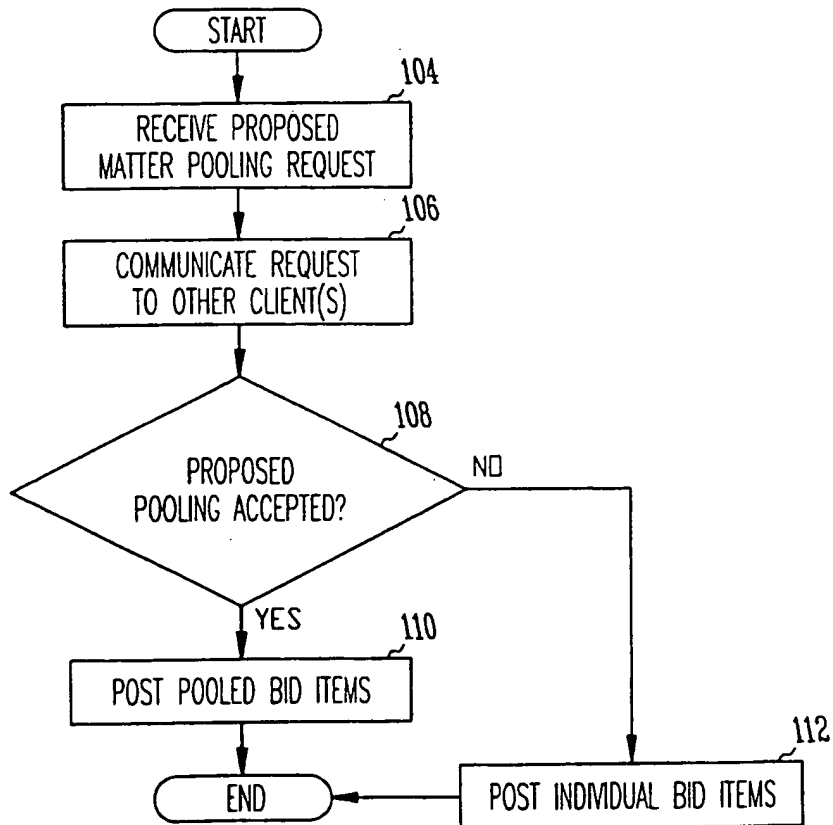
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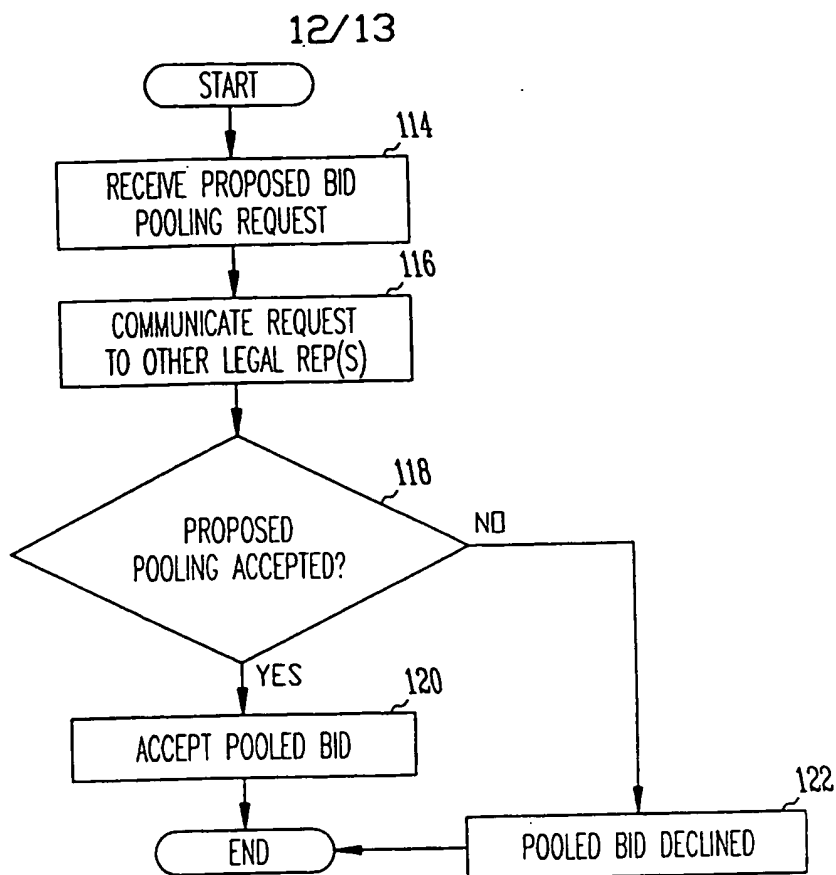
*Fig. 12*

*Fig. 13*



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*Fig. 15**Fig. 16*

*Fig. 17*